

John Sampson
"The Shamelessness of Love"
Text: Luke 2:1 - 20
Preached at KVCC
December 24, 2019 – 10 PM Service

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen.

Merry Christmas!

This evening we celebrate the coming of a love, which is looking to be born among us once again. It's trying to find a chink in the inertia of our lives, a split second when we just put down our never-ending love affair with ourselves, and let our hearts take a breath. Because that's all it needs. Just that one-second pause, which looks and

sounds like a profound yes! It's not really, but love will take it. Love takes any and every opportunity. It looks past all of the half-truths, and all of the posturing of our lives. It doesn't care; it's shameless.

And tonight, on this Christmas Eve, that's what we celebrate - love's shamelessness.

And our Christmas stories tell us all about it.

There's Mary who love approaches and comes up with some excuse about never making it past first base with a boy as a reason why she can't possibly be the vessel of love. And Love says. I don't care.

Trust me, I'll be better than anything any boy can ever give you.

She's seduced, by love's soft touch, and the way love looks into her eyes. It's almost as if an angel is there, right in her bedroom, on that bed her parents bought for her when she was a child, but now is

really too small. She's seduced, so she says yes. Because in love's presence she can believe everything will be all right.

Then there's Joseph, and who can blame him for saying no at first. He meets his friend Alex taking out the trash down at the dump. It smells bad, and there's a smoldering fire that the dump keeper is tending trying to keep up with all of the garbage that shows up throughout the day. He looks through the smoke and there's Alex, who lives two doors down on the other side of the street. Joseph likes Alex, he thinks he's funny, and nothing seems to get him down. But it's a short-lived relief to see his friend. Because Alex says that he's heard that Joseph's girl Mary has been seeing someone else, and she's going to have the guy's baby. Like I said, you can see why Joseph would say no to Mary, and the stupid marriage that his parents arranged. Wouldn't you?

But then, later that night, love comes shamelessly and casts its spell. It's such a hot proposition that Joseph thinks he must be dreaming. He's seduced on the spot. Right there with his heart broken, and anger and humiliation flooding through the image he carries of himself being a tough guy, a macho guy, a guy's guy. And then love shows up and he's not so tough after all. By the end love has him wrapped around its finger, saying yes. Yes, he'll do whatever love asks of him. Even if it makes the other guys laugh. Even if he's unmasked as a softy. Even if he agrees to go through with the marriage to Mary, with everyone knowing she's carrying someone else's baby, because everyone can see the baby bump as they stand up there at the altar, exchanging vows. Because as love seduces him Joseph knows everything will be all right, even if it's not the perfection he always imagined.

But our story tells us that love isn't finished. Love is never finished. So love takes a walk out of town, out into the fields and there it finds its next set of one life stands.

And it chooses the worst of the worst. The shepherds. Dirty. Smelly. Drunk. Some of them singing songs filled with words that good parents tell their not so good children never to say. Some of them talking about the relationships with men and women they've had, which never had anything to do with love. Some are smoking. Some are forgetting. Some are way too old to still be playing cowboy, when they really should have settled down long ago, cut their hair, and gotten a good job. Love is shameless, and by choosing the shepherds, it really shows.

Love comes in with a bang, to a bunch of men whose hearts are too hazed to remember what love ever felt like. And as love's warmth seeps into their bodies, pushing out the hangovers, and failures, and

missed opportunities to be something better, these shepherds say no in the only way they know how; they fear. They fear love, and all it promises.

But love takes these men, who are no more than big children, and it holds them and for every silent no they gasp, love responds do not fear. Love loves them until their tears dry, and their shaking stops, and their nos melt away leaving only yes behind. And this yes is so new and unexpected and miraculous it looks like the sky has exploded with angels and music. That's what love does. It makes our skies explode.

My sky, and your sky.

Because love's work isn't done. Love is so shameless that it has the audacity not to remain in the past, not to have left well enough alone with Mary and Joseph and the shepherds. It's so disrespectful that it

has to come again, on this night, to you and to me. And its going to use everything its got to find that moment when we put down our self-centeredness for just one second, a second that seems like we're saying yes, even if that's not our intention.

And I believe this is God's wish for us tonight. That when love finally propositions us, we will say yes, and let ourselves be seduced. That we will let ourselves be as shameless as love is shameless. Because this is what Christmas is all about, being fast and easy with love even when it's not earned, even when it's not deserved, even when it comes out of no where, even when it asks us to run away with it, leaving everything proper and upright behind.

I don't know about you, but maybe, just maybe I secretly want to be revealed as the softy I really am. Maybe just maybe I want have that that raw and beautiful experience of being seduced. Maybe, just maybe I want all of my skies to explode with angels and music.

This is why we celebrate on this dark and cold night, because God created something as crazy as love, and she wants to give it us. Can you say yes? Can we say yes? Because God is insisting, and love has arrived, and is knocking at the door.

Merry Christmas!

Amen.